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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, February 28, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MEALS FOR LIGHTWEIGHTS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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If you were listening in last week, you may have heard the news I brought you about food for plump people who want to lose weight. Just to show you that I'm not partial, my thin friends are to have the attention today. And I'm going to report what the nutritionists say about approved ways to put on weight.

Of course, slenderness is the fashion. The trim and youthful figure gets the admiration nowadays. But being slim is one thing. And being lean and lanky is another. Haven't you noticed that the woman who is too thin is likely to appear older than her age, often has a gaunt, worn-out look? Most people agree that curves are more attractive than sharp corners on human beings. Nobody admires an ensemble of skin and bones and wrinkles.

But appearance is not the only disadvantage in being underweight. Health and good spirits and dispositions suffer as well. Just think of the underweights you know, and see if that isn't true. For example, think of skinny Mrs. Green, "just a bundle of nerves," as she describes herself. The neighbors say she nags her husband and children out of house and home. And, think of fretting, fidgetty little Miss White, who is always in a stew over something, who can't sleep at night from worry, and who never gets any fun out of life. Finally, think of poor Mrs. Smith who is continually overdoing, always ailing, catching every germ that blows her way.

Listeners, a little more upholstery over high-tension nerves -- that's what most of these friends need. Sometimes a little extra padding is better than rose-colored glasses for making the world more cheerful.

Underweight people often don't realize how much unnecessary fatigue and nervous strain they endure. Of course, a few pounds under won't make much difference. But if you are 15 or 20 percent below average, you need to make a real effort to take on flesh. Insurance records show that young people are safer if they are over the average in weight, but that, once you are past 35, you are safer if you keep a few pounds below. These records also show that underweight young people are especially liable to tuberculosis and pneumonia.

By the way, probably the best guides available for correct weight are the average height-weight tables worked out by the insurance companies. But in using such a table, allow a little leeway for your special build. If you are short and happen to have broad shoulders and wide hip-bones, you naturally will weigh more than your neighbor of the same height and age who has smaller bones.

Well, the underweight has as much of a problem as the overweight. And the wise way for her to solve it is by diet and rest and proper exercise.

Let's talk about the thin lady's meals first, since the nutritionists insist that food is the big factor in weight, and that the amount and kind of nourishment you assimilate tells the tale of whether you gain or lose or "stay put." Everybody -- fat or thin or medium -- needs a diet-foundation of the protective foods. You build that safe foundation of the proteins and vitamins and minerals that you need to keep your body running and in good order. So milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables belong among the foundation foods. Then, you build from them, according to your weight. If you are thin, you add a generous amount of high-calorie foods to this foundation. If you are fat, you add chiefly the non-fattening foods.

For the underweight person that very important food, milk, heads the list of foods. If you want to gain, help yourself liberally to whole milk, and full-cream cheese, and butter, and cream. You can drink rich milk in place of part of the water you usually take at mealtime. And you can indulge in mid-afternoon or bedtime milk shakes with ice cream or whipped cream or egg.

As for breads and cereals, thin folks will do well to eat both white and dark bread as well as breakfast food. You know that the whole-grain cereals and flours help supply calories and minerals and vitamins. The plump person avoids hot breads partly because they tempt her to use butter freely. But her thin sister does just the opposite. Butter and cream raise the calories and also help the thin lady enjoy her breads and cereals.

Vegetables and fruits are foundation foods for everybody. You eat them if you are fat; you eat them if you are lean. Though such vegetables as greens and tomatoes and such fruits as oranges don't go in the fattening class, they help supply the minerals and vitamins as well as the little bulk or roughage that everybody needs. And these foods help the appetite -- a very important matter for the underweight. But you can raise your calories by preparing your vegetables with butter and cream sauce or plenty of salad dressing. And you can also raise your calories by eating plenty of sugar on your fruits.

You'll naturally take the opposite course from the lady who is reducing. To gain in weight, you will season liberally with butter and sugar; enjoy rich gravies and sauces; add a little jelly or marmalade here and there; treat yourself to desserts liberally; and now and then, top off the meal with candy and nuts.

As for the protein foods -- meat, fish, poultry and eggs, the lightweight will choose the fatter kinds of meat and fish often. She'll eat bacon and fresh pork and ham. She'll eat lean meat prepared in a hearty way. And she'll choose the richer kinds of fish like salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel.

That's the general meal plan for the girl who is working for curves. But she will do well to remember that the safe and comfortable way to gain is slowly and steadily. If you try to put on pounds too fast, you may spoil your appetite or overtax your digestion.

Of course you know that rest and sleep -- lots of it, fresh air, and sunshine, and gentle exercise all go hand in hand with a good gaining diet. Some women lack appetite from weariness but don't know it. Others need exercise to wake up their appetites. Some people can't eat from nerves and worry. And a few thin folks I know keep thin by arguing at mealtime. A family quarrel can spoil the best diet in the world.

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